

new millennium, as we continue to change course, confront crises, and continue the legacy, I will do so with the continued guidance and love of an infinite God, with extraordinary hope, with profound faith, and with the knowledge that in caring for the least of our brothers and sisters, we care for ourselves. We cannot afford to be indifferent.

As we celebrate two centuries of the end of the African slave trade, it is my hope that today will be the beginning of the end of the decades of mindless hatred, bigotry, and discrimination against all God's children. All Americans have an investment in a stable, violence-free government, and that is exactly what this bill provides.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1592, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act. This bill lends a voice to those who have no voice.

As a nation, we have been endowed to preserve the truth that all men and women are created equal under God and as Members of Congress, we must fight to preserve this truth as long as we continue to live in a democracy.

The Hate Crimes Prevention Act does not in any way infringe on the First Amendment rights of Americans. On the contrary, the bill only covers violent criminal actions. Nothing in this legislation would prohibit any form of lawful expression of one's religious beliefs.

This legislation brings our current hate crimes laws into the 21st century by expanding the current provision to cover all violent crimes motivated by race, color, religion, or national origin when the defendant causes bodily injury, or attempts to cause bodily injury through use of fire, a firearm, or an explosive device.

Additionally, the bill will also allow the Federal Government to provide crucial Federal resources to State and local agencies to equip local officers with the tools they need to prosecute hate crimes. This resolution ensures that the Federal prosecution of hate crimes is limited to cases that implicate the greatest Federal interest and present the greatest need for Federal intervention.

This bill will protect people like Billy Ray Johnson of Linden, TX, a mentally-challenged African-American man who suffered severe brain damage after being maliciously attacked by four white men who hurled racial expletives at him. This law would properly prosecute the individuals, ensure that justice is allowed to run its course, and is seen by Mr. Johnson's family.

In conclusion Mr. Speaker, hate in any form is neither a Democratic nor an American value and I do not subscribe to it.

We must love our neighbors and moreover we must protect them from crimes committed against them due to their self-expression.

We must be vehemently opposed to prejudice in all forms. I strongly support this legislation and encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of this important bill.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1592, The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007.

In 2003 the FBI announced that there were more than 9,000 reported hate crime victims in these United States. This means that on average 25 people per day were victims of violence fueled by the toxic fumes of hate. If you are not outraged by this figure then you haven't been paying attention. As a former

prosecutor in Cuyohoga County, OH, I know that these numbers are shocking for a number of reasons.

In a country as blessed as we are, and with the resources that we have, we still have an absurdly high crime rate. Violence is taken to be the norm. Local news in most big cities begins with a report on who was shot. Then, we have a country which regularly puts out a report on the human rights records of other countries around the world. Is a hate crime not a human rights issue? It has been long established constitutional doctrine that individuals should not be treated differently based on their race, color, creed, nationality, gender or sexual orientation.

This Act allows the Justice Department to grant local jurisdictions up to \$100,000 to help prosecute hate crimes. It also provides monies for preventative programs to stem the growing tide of hate crimes committed by minors. In the Bible, verse 5:43 in the Gospel of Matthew, it says "Love thy neighbor." That is what this bill is about.

The time is now to pass this legislation. We honor our founders, ancestors, and the people who built this great Nation by ensuring that going forward, Americans from every walk of life can walk down our streets in peace.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of hate crime prevention.

Our laws should reflect the reality that hate crimes are fundamentally different from ordinary crimes. Hate crimes cause entire communities to live in fear of being attacked simply because of who they are. Hate crimes are meant to send a message and terrorize an entire group of people, not just an individual victim.

Hate crimes are a national issue and should be dealt with at the national level. In 2005, more than 7,000 hate crimes were reported to the FBI. Even this high number is certainly lower than the actual numbers of crimes committed all across America, as many go unreported and the FBI does not receive information from all law enforcement agencies.

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 (H.R. 1592) recognizes the need for a federal response and allocates the necessary resources to investigate and prosecute hate crimes when local officials are unable or unwilling to investigate incidents of hate crime. Local authorities, however, would maintain their autonomy and primary authority for these investigations. Federal intervention would be the last resort.

The bill also removes existing barriers that prohibit the FBI and the Department of Justice from fully assisting local law enforcement agencies in addressing hate crimes. This is vital because local governments often lack the resources necessary to properly conduct expensive hate crimes investigations and prosecutions. For example, the investigation of the Matthew Shepard murder in Wyoming cost over \$150,000 and resulted in lay-offs at the local Sheriff's department.

Congress has a moral and constitutional obligation to offer the full protection of our Nation's laws to all individuals. This vital legislation expands existing hate crime protections to those who are targeted because of their gender, disability, or sexual orientation. These groups have been frequent targets of hate crimes. According to the FBI, 14 percent of reported hate crimes are motivated by sexual-orientation bias.

I fully support this bill. But I feel compelled to also note that it fails to address the growing number of hate crimes being committed against homeless individuals. The National Coalition for the Homeless has documented 614 hate crimes against homeless individuals since 1999, including 189 deaths. Some of these crimes against society's most vulnerable have been caught on tape, giving us a glimpse into the violence and fear of violence that many homeless people experience on a daily basis. I hope that this body will work to bring the issue of hate crimes against homeless individuals to light and move toward protections that recognize the value of all of our neighbors, including those lacking shelter.

Hate crimes impact all of us and it is our collective responsibility to actively confront the terror they cause. I urge all of my colleagues to support this important bill.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, H.R. 1592, which will provide needed assistance to State and local law enforcement agencies and make changes to Federal law to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of violent, bias-motivated crimes against people for no other reason than their perceived or actual race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.

Hate crimes are alarmingly prevalent and threaten the full participation of all Americans in our democratic society. While State and local governments will maintain principal responsibility, an expanded Federal role in investigating and prosecuting serious forms of hate crimes is critical in targeting and preventing hate crime in our Nation. The measure importantly applies only to bias-motivated violent crimes and does not impinge free speech in any way. In fact, it explicitly states: "Nothing in this Act, or the amendments made by this Act, shall be construed to prohibit any expressive conduct protected from legal prohibition by, or any activities protected by the free speech or free exercise clauses of, the First Amendment to the Constitution."

H.R. 1592 is supported by virtually every major law enforcement organization in the country. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1592.

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to express my opposition to H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

This measure represents an unprecedented departure from the deeply rooted American principle of equal justice under law.

Justice should be blind. It should be equal for all Americans, and it should be rendered in a criminal justice system that does not take such issues as race, gender, and religion into consideration.

It makes no sense to me that crimes committed against one citizen should be punished any more or any less than crimes committed against another, which is what this bill will do.

Violent crimes that are not aimed at a certain class of people, like those committed recently at Virginia Tech, are just as reprehensible as those that are committed for other reasons.

Yet this bill would likely treat the senseless, random violence at Virginia Tech less harshly than other, less "random" crimes.

Even worse, the bill asks local law enforcement to infer if a crime was committed "because of" bias toward a protected group. This